



NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**RIISING TIDES: THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF
THE BLACK SEA AND ROMANIA FOR U.S. NAVAL
STRATEGY**

by

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June 2017

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE June 2017		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE RISING TIDES: THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE BLACK SEA AND ROMANIA FOR U.S. NAVAL STRATEGY			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) James H. Palmer				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB number ____N/A____.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the relationship between the United States and Russia has regained the attention of America in ways not seen since the final days of the Cold War. Romania, a nation historically embattled between the East and West, positions itself as a stalwart ally of the United States against a resurgent Russia. To understand the motivations of each actor one must be keenly aware of both the history and the culture of each side. As the United States navigates into unforeseen waters piloted by the Trump administration, a possible battle on the Black Sea appears imminent, if not in military might then certainly in ideology. This thesis explores the past interactions of Romania, the United States, and Russia through an historical perspective in order to analyze present motivations. An attempt to understand intentions behind actions may prove helpful in preventing a possible flashpoint on the Black Sea and a renewed Cold War.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Black Sea, United States, Romania, Russia, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Aegis			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 79	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

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**RISING TIDES: THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE BLACK SEA AND
ROMANIA FOR U.S. NAVAL STRATEGY**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(EUROPE AND EURASIA)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the relationship between the United States and Russia has regained the attention of America in ways not seen since the final days of the Cold War. Romania, a nation historically embattled between the East and West, positions itself as a stalwart ally of the United States against a resurgent Russia. To understand the motivations of each actor, one must be keenly aware of both the history and the culture of each side. As the United States navigates into unforeseen waters piloted by the Trump administration, a possible battle on the Black Sea appears imminent, if not in military might then certainly in ideology. This thesis explores the past interactions of Romania, the United States, and Russia through an historical perspective in order to analyze present motivations. An attempt to understand intentions behind actions may prove helpful in preventing a possible flashpoint on the Black Sea and a renewed Cold War.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFRICOM	African Command
BSEC	Black Sea economic cooperation
BSS	Black Sea synergy
BMD	ballistic missile defense
CACI	Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst
CENTCOM	Central Command
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
EfP	enhanced forward presence
EPAA	European phased adaptive approach
ERI	European Reassurance Initiative
EU	European Union
EUCOM	European Command
FY	fiscal year
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
ICBM	Intercontinental ballistic missile
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MAP	Membership Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NFIU	NATO force integration unit
NRF	NATO response force
OAR	Operation Atlantic Resolve
PACOM	Pacific Command
PfP	Partnership for Peace
RAND	research and development
RAP	Readiness Action Plan
RT	Russia Today
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
START	strategic arms reduction treaty
TASS	Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union

UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USS	United States ship
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VJTF	very high readiness joint task force

I. INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the Ukraine crisis in 2014, the advent of a major United States Navy anti-missile base in Romania has implications for the policy, strategy, and operations of the U.S. Navy in a moment of great strategic turmoil in the Pacific and the Atlantic. This thesis takes a lead from the need within the U.S. Navy Strategic Enterprise, that is, the attempt by the Chief of Naval Operations to strengthen strategic thought and practice in the brains of the Navy. To this end, the inquiry seeks to determine the character of Romanian foreign, security, and defense policy as pertains to the Black Sea in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This work further assesses the impact of the Ukraine crisis, and the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Romania as these issues have an impact on the U.S. armed forces and NATO.

A. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ROMANIAN AND BLACK SEA

In its progress from the socialist camp to NATO and the European Union from 1989 until the present, Romania has undergone impressive reforms economically, politically and militarily, all in an effort to modernize and become more westernized.¹ These reforms paid off with the membership of NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007. Romania has ushered in a new age of democracy and security in a relatively short period. As a casualty of the worst effects of the two World Wars and Cold War, Romania is a critical, often-overlooked European country that stands at the front of a region amid an international crisis: the South Central and Eastern Europe, and the Black Sea.² With the deteriorating security situation in Europe, it is as important as ever for those in the U.S. Navy charged with Eurasian security to understand the policy and capabilities of Romania, as well as the growing unrest in the Black Sea region as a whole.

In the wake of membership under the Washington Treaty, NATO and the United States have continued to strengthen relationships with Romania in the realms of policy

¹ Alexandra Gheciu, *NATO in the "New Europe": The Politics of International Socialization after the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 169.

² Robert Kaplan, *In Europe's Shadow: Two Cold Wars and a Thirty-Year Journey Through Romania and Beyond* (New York: Random House, 2016), 29–31.

but also that of armament. As part of the construction of an anti-missile forward defense directed against Iran or a like power, in December 2016, Aegis Ashore, an U.S. anti-ballistic missile defense base opened in Deveselu, Romania.³ Furthermore, Romania has agreed to host anti-ballistic missiles in country. A vital part of NATO's plan for a European missile shield, Romania's actions have provoked Russian aggression.

In an area of increasing instability because of Russian aggression as well as the geopolitical collapse of the Middle East in the wake of the Iraq campaign, Romania is becoming a lynchpin of the Black Sea. Russia perceives the Black Sea region and much of Eastern Europe as under its self-proclaimed sphere of influence. After a conflict in Georgia, an ongoing hybrid war in Ukraine, an annexation of Crimea, and a show of power in the Syrian War, Russia is extending its reach and projecting influence in a contested area of the Europe.⁴ After the attempted coup in Turkey, Romania remains the most dependable ally in the Black Sea region.

While U.S. defense funding, assets, and action shifted to the Pacific theater, many argue that there is a renewed Cold War brewing in Europe. The rising number of terrorist attacks in Europe in 2015–2017, Brexit, the military coup in Turkey, and increased aggression in Russian rhetoric all seemingly point to a growing unrest in the status quo. Besides the opening of Aegis Ashore in Romania, the United States has shifted four Aegis destroyers to Rota, Spain, and has plans to open another Aegis Ashore in Poland, as well as station an X-Band Radar site in Turkey.⁵ U.S. Naval personnel who will serve in Romania must understand the strategic as well as civil military context of their service in this NATO ally and in the region, overall.

³ “Key Missile Defence Site Declared Operational,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified May 12, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_130721.htm.

⁴ Thomas Frear, Ian Kearns, and Lukasz Kulesa, “Preparing for the Worst: Are Russian and NATO Military Exercises Making War in Europe more Likely?” *European Leadership Network*, last modified August 7, 2015, 3–4, <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2015/08/07/ea2b8c22/Preparing%20for%20the%20Worst.pdf>.

⁵ North Atlantic Council, “Warsaw Summit Communique,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified August 3, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been an inconsistency in the literature concerning Romania's importance to Black Sea regional security in the past few decades. The information that has been found is mostly contained in journal articles, statements, government bulletins, and briefings. Since the early 2000s, literature has steadily increased with Romania's participation in wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Literature was more abundant as Romania was admitted into NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007. Then, with Russia's annexation of Crimea and the opening of Aegis Ashore in Deveselu, new literature can be found daily. Not surprisingly, the increase in writing has been directly proportional to the exponential increase in action in Romania and the Black Sea, with attempts being made to gain an understanding of the area as key to European Security.

The leading schools of thought concerning Romania and the Black Sea can essentially be separated into two groupings. It may be useful to look at the case of Romania through the realist's lens as a classic security dilemma. Romania, as throughout its history, is directly in the middle of a conflict between the powers and influence of the West versus the power and influence from Russia.⁶ As in any conflict, the two sides have opposing perceptions of each other's actions.

The first theme, and what seems to be the most prevalent, is that Russia has been increasing its aggression in a bid to reassert itself not only in the Black Sea region, but on the world stage as well. Coinciding with this viewpoint is the firm stance that any action by Romania and NATO is purely defensive in nature. NATO leaders reiterated this theme most recently at the 2016 Warsaw Summit in July:

Russia's aggressive actions, including provocative military activities in the periphery of NATO territory and its demonstrated willingness to attain political goals by the threat and use of force, are a source of regional instability, fundamentally challenge the Alliance, have damaged Euro-Atlantic security, and threaten our long-standing goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. ... Russia's destabilising actions and policies include the ongoing illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, which we do

⁶ Igor Delanoe and Sergei Konoplyov. "Continuities and Ruptures: Tracking the U.S. Interests in the Black Sea Area in the Context of the 'Pivot to Asia'." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 3 (2014): 356. doi: 10.1080/19448953.2014.928539.

not and will not recognise and which we call on Russia to reverse; the violation of sovereign borders by force; the deliberate destabilisation of eastern Ukraine; large-scale snap exercises contrary to the spirit of the Vienna Document, and provocative military activities near NATO borders, including in the Baltic and Black Sea regions and the Eastern Mediterranean; it's irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric, military concept and underlying posture; and its repeated violations of NATO Allied airspace.⁷

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Romanian Prime Minister Dacian Ciolos, and U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work met in May 2016, right before the Warsaw Summit at a press conference following the operationalization ceremony of Aegis Ashore in Romania. Specifically addressing the issue of Aegis in regard to perceptions of Russia, Prime Minister Ciolos stated, "This system is not directed against Russia...it is not an offensive system, it is a defensive system...it is legitimate for any country to allocate resources and to defend itself."⁸ In the same press conference, Secretary General Stoltenberg addressed the issues of increasing NATO's naval presence in the Black Sea affirming:

We have already increased our naval presence in the Black Sea and we did so because we agreed that after the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and the destabilizing behavior of Russia in Eastern Ukraine supporting the separatists we decided to implement what we call assurance measures in the Eastern part of the alliance.⁹

NATO, Romania, and the U.S. view Russia's aggression as a threat to regional security. To combat the aggression actions of Russian President Vladimir Putin, NATO allies have increased presence in the Black Sea and bolstered defenses in ally countries. As part of the NATO Force Structure through the Adaptation Measures of Readiness Action Plan, NATO has established the "Headquarters of a Multinational Division Southeast in Romania to take command of the NATO Force Integration Units and to provide flexible command and control options in their regions."¹⁰

⁷ North Atlantic Council, "Warsaw Summit Communique."

⁸ North Atlantic Council, "Joint Press Point," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified May 13, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_130698.htm.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ North Atlantic Council, "Warsaw Summit Communique."

NATO maintains that the opening of Romania's AEGIS Ashore and establishment of the Southeastern NATO Headquarters, are merely defensive actions to bolster a security whose status quo was upset by Putin who "dramatically altered the European security landscape," according to NATO's Gabriel Mallows.¹¹ In a statement to the House Armed Services Committee, then-Commander of U.S. Forces Europe General Philip Breedlove, testified that "President Putin's Russia has abandoned all pretense of participating in a collaborative security process with its neighbors and the international community."¹²

Russia's perceived saber rattling is anything but, according to Russia's viewpoint. The opposing theme is that NATO is the aggressive actor and Russia's actions are wholly defensive in reaction to a perceived western expansion. One only has to look at a map of NATO allies to understand the feeling of entrapment. Any move by NATO is seen as an infringement on Russia.

As Mallows asserts, "Russia's actions in Ukraine were, in the eyes of Russia and its defenders, defensive; Russia argues that NATO has been trying to encircle them since the end of the Cold War."¹³ Russia's 2014 doctrine frequently uses the terms "neighbourhood" not explicitly naming specific states but rather "states bordering the Russian Federation" in reference to the perceived "need to defend what it sees as its vital sphere of influence."¹⁴

Whether warranted or not, perceptions hold an important place in Russian culture, a nation that places great importance on the image of strength. NATO, a creation during

¹¹ Gabriel Mallows, "NATO's Security Dilemma," NATO Association of Canada, accessed August 21, 2016, <http://natoassociation.ca/natos-security-dilemma/>.

¹² Philip Breedlove, "Statement of General Philip Breedlove," U.S. European Command, Department of Defense, last modified February 25, 2015, <http://www.eucom.mil/mission/background/posture-statement>.

¹³ Mallows, "NATO's Security Dilemma."

¹⁴ Polina Sinovets and Bettina Renz, "Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine and Beyond: Threat Perceptions, Capabilities, and Ambitions," NATO Research Paper 117, NATO Defense College, July 2015, 2-3, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/research.php?icode=0>.

the Cold War, seemingly will always hold a stigma of an enemy to Russian no matter what declarations to the contrary are made.¹⁵

To fully comprehend the intricacies of Romania and security in the Black Sea, one must develop a thorough understanding of perceptions, based on history and culture, from both sides. Only then can one begin to fully comprehend the motivations behind the actions. As in any security dilemma, the key will be in deciphering between acts engaged in fear mongering or grandstanding and acts that may represent something more serious. If the aim is to prevent another Cold War, the correct interpretation will be vital.

C. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

After an initial investigation into the research for the thesis and a careful examination of the primary themes, two potential hypotheses stand out. The first is that each side, the West and Russia, have perceived aggression from the other and in reaction are bolstering their defenses and upping their rhetoric to gain influence on the world stage. These acts while worrisome will merely result in a careful balancing and settled status quo in Eastern Europe. Black Sea fleets on the western and eastern coasts will increase in their size and frequency of operations. Yet, with common interests in the area, diplomatic talks may lead to increased cooperation between the West and Russia.¹⁶

The second explanation, and currently more likely, is that acts of aggression will continue to be perceived as such. A build-up will occur but will not end peacefully or with any aims at coordination. The U.S. will continue to protect its interests in the area and devote more resources to NATO, Romania, and Eastern Europe. Russia will continue its war in Ukraine and most likely seek to assert its influence further west. This is clearly the more dangerous result and may bring about renewed conflicts between old Cold War rivals.¹⁷

¹⁵ Roland Dannreuther, "Russian Perceptions of the Atlantic Alliance," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/95-97/dannreut.pdf>.

¹⁶ Robert Pszczel, "How NATO Is Perceived in Russia (Or Lessons in Optimism)," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accessed August 21, 2016, http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2011/nato_russia/lessons-optimism/EN/index.htm.

¹⁷ Sinovets and Renz, "Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine and Beyond: Threat Perceptions, Capabilities, and Ambitions."

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

The most appropriate research method for this thesis will use a qualitative approach within a strong historical context. Using the timeframe from the establishment of Romania, through both World Wars and into the Cold War, the Romanian Revolution of 1989, signaling the end of communism in Romania and in the years indicating the end of the Cold War, up until present day will offer a view of Romania's evolution as pertains to current issues. Examining political and military trends in Romania and the Black Sea Region within a historical context of events in not only Europe but Russia as well will offer a foundation for comparative analysis. U.S., NATO, Romanian and Russian views will be identified so as to build a comprehensive analysis in order to gain an understanding of both sides.

Scholarly publications will be examined for facts and opinions popular in the parties involved. The research will rely upon government as well as non-governmental organization documents and transcripts to gain an understanding of the policies and strategies underlying the major issues at play. Articles from well-informed foreign and domestic news agencies will also be utilized to form a basis of the perceptions of actors in the area. Together these types of materials will form a well-rounded research for the thesis, taking into account Western and Russian perceptions.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

The thesis will contain chapters on the major influences in Romania and the Black Sea as well as chapters containing the differing historical and cultural perspectives of actors involved. The first chapter will be the introduction outlining the history of Romania in regard to the effects on current issues. Following the introduction will be chapters on Romania's evolution in NATO and the European Union as well as the relationship specifically with that of the United States. In addition, a chapter will discuss current issues and conflicts from the western perspective and then that of the Russian perspective. The final chapter and conclusion will provide implications for future Black Sea/Romania-Russia potential for cooperation as well as conflict.

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II. ROMANIA: HISTORY AND POLITICS

A. INTRODUCTION

Romania has emerged as a steadfast ally to the U.S. and as an enthusiastic member to NATO. Serving alongside through joint operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and now upon the completion of a permanent U.S. Navy base in Deveselu, members of the U.S. military must be aware of the historical context and cultural perspective that has guided Romanians to the position they enjoy today. It is impossible to understand the relationship between the west and Romania without a thorough examination of Romania's past. From the beginnings to the development as a nation-state, from the Revolution of 1848 to World War I and II, and through Romanian communism to a return to Europe, Romania's history is one of choices and identity. Continuously confronted by a choice between the West and East, Romania has made difficult decisions with regard to what is best for Romania.

B. THE BEGINNINGS OF A ROMANIA

The long-term trend of Romanian people caught in the middle between the East and the West harkens back to the very genesis of what would become Romania. Encounters between the Thracians and Dacians, first with Greek cities along the Black Sea coast and later with the Romans during conquest in the second century AD would influence the area bounded by the Danube, Tisza, and Dniester Rivers.¹⁸ Upon absorption into the Roman Empire, the province of Dacia as it became known, underwent a steady Romanization. All aspects of civilization adapted to the way of Roman society; government and its laws and judicial system, social and economic foundations, and religious practices, all became Roman. Roman was not the only influence though; Slavs from the north migrated into areas along the Danube and formal church institutions adopted Slavic as the official language of the church. The territory eventually formed into the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, with people known as Romanians, and the

¹⁸ Keith Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 7–19.

province of Transylvania, which was part of the Hungarian Empire. Transylvania's destiny would be different though, as the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia stood in the path of the Ottoman Turkish armies of conquest.

Gradually assimilating to Ottoman rule, the Byzantine culture influenced the Romanian's religion, culture, politics and economy. The Orthodox rule was broad but the principalities were never truly isolated from the West. Educated people were always aware of their Roman origins. Under conquest again, this time by Hungary, the principalities sought help from outside, Romanians would ask themselves whether they should turn to the west or to the east. Transylvania would follow the eastern model and set up "an authoritarian secular power and a single, dominant church."¹⁹ Wallachia would appeal to the West and sought help directly from Pope Urban V.²⁰ Allegiances eventually fell as Ottoman supremacy reigned. For a brief period, all three principalities of Transylvania, Moldavia, and Wallachia were united under Prince of Wallachia, Mihai Viteazul The Brave, who would achieve his grand design. Although the union would be short-lived, his boldness would become "a symbol of Romanian national destiny for generations of patriots in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."²¹

In the seventeenth century, Romania would find itself torn between the Austrians, Russians, and Ottomans. Currents infiltrated the ruling class and the educated about where one's place in history should be. After the Protestant Reformation and later the Renaissance, the seventeenth century "marked a crisis of conscience among both clerical and lay elites not unrelated to the political and economic turmoil that encompasses rulers and boiers."²² People conscious of trends in Europe fostered the secular spirit in culture. Romanians would come to measure their success against that of the West. Historian Ivan Berend suggests that

Eastern European reformers, comparing the situation of their own countries to that of the sparkling ideas and spectacular transformation of

¹⁹ Hitchins, *Romania*, 23.

²⁰ Ibid., 24.

²¹ Ibid., 35.

²² Ibid., 46.

the West, noticed the growing gap between the two and looked to the latter as a model to follow.²³

With this came a language-reform movement “in the service of nation building.”²⁴ A major event fostering the idea of the nation was the Act of Union in 1701, with the Orthodoxy clergy and faithful recognizing the Pope of Rome.²⁵ Perhaps the most important consequence of the Union was the idea of a Romania identity. The community of clergy saw the church as a bridge between the East and West:

They conceived of nation in ways that differed fundamentally from the privileged communities represent by the three nations; the nation the clergy served was ethnic, and it encompassed all Romanians, even if social distinctions remained strong.²⁶

As much as the return to Rome united the people, they still clung to the eastern cultural and religious heritage and therefore were “utterly opposed to making their Greek Catholic Church more Latin.”²⁷ Despite internal struggles of identity, the principalities of Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania stood on the threshold of modernity. As European ideas and behavior infiltrated society, people “strove to reconcile their Eastern heritage with Western innovation.”²⁸

C. ROMANIA: FROM REVOLUTION TO WORLD WAR

The nineteenth century in ways was the perfect storm for Central Europe. European great powers attempting to exert their influence confronted a weakened Ottoman Empire, which internally affected the way Romanians thought about themselves and what path to development and eventually independence they should take. Russia was most aggressive fighting three victorious wars against the Ottomans and eventual defeat

²³ Ivan T. Berend, *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 3.

²⁴ Ibid., 51.

²⁵ Hitchins, *Romania*, 59–60.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 61.

of Napoleon, establishing itself as an “informal protectorate over [Romanians].”²⁹ Yet culturally, western Europeans were winning the battles. Through the European Enlightenment, Romanians embraced their history; “they were European also in their embrace of Rome and Roman civilization, thereby joining in the revival of the classical tradition.”³⁰ A youth movement formed, founded as the Junimea movement with reformers who “accepted the need for Rumania to evolve toward a modern civilization on the Western model.”³¹ A dream of a Greater Romania was growing. As Hitchins contends, “To liberals, the West was a source of inspiration, to the conservatives a cause of anxiety, as both sides warmed to the debate over national identity and paths of development.”³² Literature and poetry flourished in population centers on the rise, reflecting ideas of national unity and sympathy to the lower classes.³³ Enthusiasm mixed with patriotism resulted in the revolution of 1848, resulting in a kind of liberalism henceforth known as Forty-Eightism.³⁴ Bucharest was occupied by Turkish troops who quickly shut down the call for a new order, which was kept suppressed by Russian troops who remained in the principality until 1851.³⁵ Their claim though, that “equal political rights followed naturally from the sharing of a common history and membership in the same ethnic community” would be cemented in the national thought.³⁶ Supporting the Junimea movement, the romantic glorification of the past hero, Prince Mihai The Brave “was by no means accidental, but mirrored perfectly the heightened pre-occupation with national unity and independence.”³⁷ The year 1848, despite the unsuccessful protests, in many ways marked Romania’s integration into Europe.

²⁹ Ibid., 68–69.

³⁰ Ibid., 72.

³¹ Berend, *History Derailed*, 4.

³² Hitchins, *Romania*, 76.

³³ Ibid., 88.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Berend, *History Derailed*, 112.

³⁶ Hitchins, *Romania*, 89.

³⁷ Ibid., 90.

The dream of the Forty-Eighters would be realized in a strange chain of events culminating from the Crimean War. The victors of the war imposed on Russia in the Treaty of Paris, signed March 30, 1856, a sovereignty that prevented any single power from interfering in the principalities.³⁸ A serious consequence from the Treaty was the cessation of the territory of Bessarabia to Moldavia from Russia. With Russia no longer bordering the Danube, the “Tsar felt the loss of territory as a personal affront and was committed to recovering it.”³⁹ Russia only recently acquired the Bessarabian territory under the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812 following the defeat Napoleon.⁴⁰ Although during that time, the citizens of Moldavia and the other principalities for that matter “were painfully aware of the relentless Russification to which an authoritarian, centralizing regime had subjected the Orthodox Church, education, and cultural life, but they had no means of reversing the integration of the province.”⁴¹

As the mental awareness clarified following the Crimean War, the use of the word Romania surpassed the individual principalities and eventually in 1866, Romania adopted a formal constitution. Unclear was the relationship with Russia. Relations were strained as Russia defeated the Ottoman Empire, and Romania was left out of negotiations at the Congress of Berlin to draw up the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878.⁴² While the treaty recognized the independence of Romania, it however, required the return of Bessarabia to Russia, since the territory had been ceded to Moldavia that ceased to exist under the current realization of Romania.⁴³ Russia would integrate Bessarabia into the Empire as fully as possible. “Romanian intellectual and cultural life stagnated as Russia became the language of instruction in state schools and Romanian ceased to be a subject of study and as publications in Romanian were reduced to a trickle and literary creativity practically ceased.”⁴⁴ Yet native language and tradition survived in the villages

³⁸ Ibid., 101.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 69.

⁴¹ Ibid., 103.

⁴² Ibid., 118.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 147–8.

and in the churches. As much, if not more than the 1848 Revolution, the conquests of Bessarabia would leave a lasting imprint on the minds of Romanians until this present day.

Still, Romania had earned its independence. The sudden realization had brought “politicians, economists, and social thinkers face to face with all the problems of national development.”⁴⁵ Europeanists drew upon the western model, seeking industrialization and urbanization, while traditionalists desired to preserve the agricultural nature of Romania society. The factions that rejected the westernization were by no means small. In ways, it mirrored class distinctions. Educated elites looked toward the West as everyone else “declared Romania to be a country of peasant” and their “economic and social future as being inextricably linked to small, self-sufficient peasant holdings.”⁴⁶ The peasant way of life was forced to adapt through massive industrialization and commercialization of the agriculture sector, resulting in peasant uprisings. Political points of view differed with the debate never fully settled between those who embraced the somewhat radical change and those who feared Romania had “opened their doors too widely.”⁴⁷ Soon continental events would force the Romanians to choose a direction.

D. WORLD WARS

Some will look back at the world wars as evidence the East and West forcing Romania to choose, however it would be more truthful to say Romania has been in the position of choosing since population centers first arose on the Danube. Nonetheless, the end of the nineteenth century saw fear and commitments on the rise. Romania had to decide with whom its alliance should take place. Public opinion leaned toward France, but the disdain shown to Romania at the Congress of Berlin raised doubts. Russia was not a viable option, since many in charge were liberals and thought of Russia as the enemy.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 125.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 121.

Romania admired Germany's "economic vitality and military might" and therefore found the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy the most appealing.⁴⁸

1. The Triple Alliance

Signed on October 30, 1883, the alliance with the Central Powers proved to be the cornerstone of Romanian foreign policy for three decades for the sole reason that Romanian King Carol and a few elites judged the Central Powers to be the most powerful alliance in Europe, and therefore most likely to guarantee security for Romania.⁴⁹ Each member pledged to defend the other upon attack and to not enter into additional treaties with other nations. The alliance would be tested with the Balkan Wars. Threatened by the disruption of balance of power in the region, Romania entered into the Second Balkan war against the advisement of the allies. Romania performed well against Bulgaria, thus emerged over-confident, and with its territory enlarged. The Treaty of Bucharest in August of 1913 would signify the alienation of Romania from the Triple Alliance.⁵⁰

2. The Triple Entente

Tsar Nicholas II would visit Constanta on June 14, 1914 marking the beginning of a new era of relations between Russia and Romania. Weeks later, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo sparking the events leading to a century of destruction. Romania caught in the middle, while still entangled in the Triple Alliance would decide upon neutrality. After King Carol died in October of 1914, Romania remained set on neutrality until the course of the war played out and a winner became clear.⁵¹ Romania judged the Western Allies to be the winning side and sought the most beneficial guarantees from the Triple Entente before marching into war. It was not until nearly two years later that Romania was able to secure acceptable negotiations and officially entered into war August 17, 1916. The allies were less concerned with Romania's national aspirations and more concerned with using the Romanian army to

⁴⁸ Ibid., 149.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 149.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 150.

⁵¹ Ibid., 151.

open up another battlefield against the Central Powers. The Romanians' ideas of increased territory and a reimagined Kingdom of Romania faded quickly as within four months German troops occupied Bucharest as well as half of the country.⁵² Events far away from Romania determined the end of the war but Romania, on the victorious side, was overly optimistic at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Prime Minister Ionel Bratianu was confident of gaining international recognition of new boundaries ascertained in the final months of the war as well as those promised in the treaty of 1916. However, the Big Four of Great Britain, France, the United States, and Italy, combined with Japan to form the Supreme Council and decided otherwise for Romania. Romania would not gain all the territory expected but did reacquire Bessarabia with details to be worked out between Romania and Russia. While relegated to second-tier status on the international stage, Romania moved forward and set upon repairing damage from the war, and integrating new provinces and citizens into the nation-state.

3. Interwar Period

Modern Romania arose from the turmoil of the First World War reaching its highest potential as a nation thus far. Perhaps the greatest achievement was the rise of the middle class. Although agriculture remained the foundation of Romania's economy, industry and city centers grew to new levels creating a vibrant social and political life.⁵³ Yet, as quickly as Romania recreated itself, so did Germany as evidenced by the rise of Adolf Hitler. Romanian governments and politicians continued to align themselves with France and Great Britain as the dealers of peace in 1919; but as those countries continued to do little in the face of resurgent Germany, Romanian leaders became inclined to seek accommodations with Germany.⁵⁴ A great debate in Romania arose, as intellectuals and newly minted political factions attempted to choose which direction Romania should steer for the next war. Europeanists and traditionalists fought with the former insisting there was no other choice but to take the urbanized path of social and economic

⁵² Ibid., 153.

⁵³ Ibid., 160.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

development, and the latter maintaining the agrarian character and unique heritage of the Romania identity. At least both sides could agree that Romania underwent significant change and growth in the interwar period. Yet, the economic collapse in the 1930s would bring to the forefront social and economic paths to success.

4. Anti-Semitism and Dictatorships

The depression would sharpen social tensions and raise questions of Romania's national character, or more significantly, who was and was not Romanian. Anti-Semitism appealed to elements of society and was used by particular brands of nationalism.⁵⁵ None was more prominent among these factions than the Iron Guard. Calling for a national rebirth based on simple, traditional values appealed to a generation of intellectuals. Democratic institutions could not withstand the attacks from within. Politicians saw the rise of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, all the while Western democracies sat idle. As Hitchins writes, "the Iron Guard seemed, to many of them, to be the embodiment of the youthful vitality needed to set the country on the way to returning to itself."⁵⁶ Ion Antonescu would arise as the spiritual leader of the Iron Guard, but it was the establishment of King Carol II's dictatorship in 1938 that solidified Romania's path toward destruction.⁵⁷

While authoritarian, Carol and his cabinet still saw the Paris Peace as the best way to secure Romania's frontier in the face of Germany. That changed with the Munich agreement as France and Britain acquiesced in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. Closer relations with Germany were now essential to protect Romania's borders. Romania chose Nazi Germany in part because of its deep-seated hostility with Communism and the Soviet Union. Romania felt more insecure than ever when the Soviets and Germans entered into the non-aggression pact of 1939. Unknown to Romania at the time was that Germany recognized the Soviet Union's special interest in Bessarabia.

⁵⁵ Kaplan, *In Europe's Shadow*, 136-8.

⁵⁶ Hitchins, *Romania*, 173-4.

⁵⁷ Hitchins, *Romania*, 168.

5. World War II

Outbreak of war in 1939 and losses by the allies on the Western front convinced King Carol that the Allied cause was lost. Simultaneously, the Soviet Union struck to regain Bessarabia as Romania was forced to yield. Negotiations with Hitler's Germany were underway but King Carol and his cabinet were being played against other Eastern European nations. August 30, King Carol decided to accept Hitler's arbitration of Romania in exchange for a German military guarantee of new frontiers.⁵⁸ Only after Hitler's decision was formally announced did Romania realize it would lose a third of its territory and a third of its population. King Carol realized he failed to avert the country from disaster and appointed Iron Guard General Ion Antonescu to save Romania.

Antonescu quickly took charge and his ambition to rule became readily apparent. Establishing a military dictatorship, Antonescu was regarded as Hitler's second most important ally next to only Benito Mussolini of Italy.⁵⁹ Antonescu willingly supplied Hitler's war machine and when Germany turned against the Soviet Union, Antonescu declared a holy war to free Bessarabia from Soviet occupation.⁶⁰ History sees Antonescu's relationship with Hitler as ranging from a reluctant partner to willing accomplice. As Kaplan explains of Antonescu's no less than ten visits with Hitler:

Far from being overawed by the Fuhrer, Antonescu often contradicted him to his face, perhaps the only person ever allowed to do so, speaking his mind fully about Romania's territorial interests for hours on end, so that Hitler came to respect him from the beginning of their relationship.⁶¹

Antonescu would come to bear the sinister distinction of being responsible for the greatest number of Jewish deaths after only Hitler's Germany.⁶² Antonescu's reign would last until August 23, 1944, when the Red Army marched into Romania.⁶³ The Soviets would convict and execute Antonescu at a prison outside of Bucharest. Upon

⁵⁸ Ibid., 200.

⁵⁹ Kaplan, *In Europe's Shadow*, 134-6.

⁶⁰ Hitchins, *Romania*, 208.

⁶¹ Kaplan, *In Europe's Shadow*, 134.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

Antonescu's removal from power, Romanians immediately switched sides and joined the Allied forces. For the remainder of the war, Romania would contribute more troops, 538,000, to the Allied cause than any country outside of Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States.⁶⁴ Romania was in ways reluctant participants as the world fell apart around it, but also opportunistic accomplices in what would become a shameful segment in Romanian history. Kaplan bluntly summarizes:

Self-interest dominates foreign policy thinking most of the time in most places. Yet rarely has national self-interest been applied so nakedly as by Romanian regimes during World War II, descending as it did to the level of sheer opportunism. It also bears repeating that the shamelessness Romania evinced during the war was, in turn, partly a function of its impossible geographical position, especially after Munich, when Chamberlain abandoned Central Europe to Germany.

Although Romania switched sides and aided the Allies, it was very much a conquered nation occupied by the Soviet Union. Romania was forced to pay war reparations amounting to 300 million dollars to the Soviets who remained on Romanian territory.⁶⁵ The Declaration of Liberated Europe, signed February 12, 1945, required that democratic elections be held but was largely ignored by the Soviet Union.⁶⁶ Great Britain and the United States did little beyond protest, as their efforts were concentrated on rebuilding Western Europe and reaching a culminating point of victory against Japan. Therefore, through false elections and Soviet puppets, the Soviet government imposed its will upon Romania, ushering in the age of Communism.⁶⁷

E. ROMANIAN COMMUNISM

What progress Romania made into nationhood and during the interwar period ceased to flourish under Soviet communism and the national identity of Romanians was nearly erased from memory. Although the United States and Great Britain denounced the elections as unrepresentative of the will of the people, was neither prepared nor willing to

⁶⁴ Kaplan, *In Europe's Shadow*, 141.

⁶⁵ Hitchens, *Romania*, 219.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 220.

go further. Hitchins contends, “Western influence on the course of events in Romania for all intents and purposes ceased.”⁶⁸

1. Severing Ties to the West

As massive Soviet penetration into all walks of life occurred, any semblance of Western progress was halted. Kaplan states, “thus were centuries of history, national life, and cultural traditions ground up into dust.”⁶⁹ Romania was rebuilt on the Stalin communist model. Dictator Gheorghiu-Dej took power in 1947 and installed a single, mass Communist Party movement, replacing even the appearance of democratic and traditional values and norms.⁷⁰ To Romanians, the West had abandoned them to the will of the Soviets, their enemy and captor. Communism surged as secret police captured and killed citizens refusing to conform. Security troops were also in charge of the extensive prison network of over a hundred institutions modeled after Soviet gulags. Stalinism was implemented across industry, agriculture, banking, mining, and transport.⁷¹ Collective farms essentially enslaved the peasant class while censorship enslaved the intellectuals. A total police state was enforced and even after the Soviet Union underwent de-Stalinization, Romania remained at heart a brutal Stalin-model regime.

2. The Ceausescu Years

On March 19, 1965, Gheorghiu-Dej died in office making way for Nicolae Ceausescu. If Romanians thought their lives would improve with a new leader, they were sorely mistaken. Kaplan tells of Ceausescu’s exploits as “Stalinist in ideology, totalitarian in its levels of repression, and nationalist in its appeal to the emotions of its population.”⁷² With the goal of setting himself apart from the Soviet Union, Ceausescu took increasingly independent actions from that of the bloc. Ceausescu refused to break relations with Israel during the 1967 war, expanded interests in China, and outwardly

⁶⁸ Ibid., 224.

⁶⁹ Kaplan, *In Europe’s Shadow*, 100.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 99.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 101.

condemned the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.⁷³ Ceausescu was determined to pursue Romania's self-determination in foreign policy. Western nations attempted to seize the opportunity to court Ceausescu and widen the gap between his agenda and his tense relations with Moscow.⁷⁴ President Nixon would visit Ceausescu in Bucharest in 1969, and Romania would become a member of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).⁷⁵ However, as Ceausescu pursued a course independent from Moscow, he would become emboldened by China and North Korea.

Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, after travelling to China and North Korea became envious of the mass mobilizations and perfectly choreographed pageants. The Ceausescus embarked on plan to rebuild Romania on the North Korean model through a process of systemization. He was chiefly concerned with his grip on Romanian power and his image as an international actor. The Ceausescus became obsessed with creating a new order built on Marxist-Leninist ideals. The Ceausescus used Romania as their personal dictatorship, with images and statues of them in constant view. Ceausescu began to trust only his family members in an arrogant display of nepotism, as he raised his wife to a position of power second to only his, and prepared his son to succeed him.⁷⁶ Western powers began to see Ceausescu as a useful containment method to the Soviet Union but none of this improved the lives of the Romanian people, and they would soon revolt against him.

3. 1989 Revolution

Opposition to Ceausescu built up in the decade prior to his downfall. Strikes, demonstrations, and attacks on party buildings showed the will of the people. Insulating himself from reality, Ceausescu promoted the use of force instead of dialogue in dealing with the many grievances. In December of 1989, unrest spread rapidly as workers, young

⁷³ Hitchens, *Romania*, 276.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 277.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 278.

people, and the general populace poured onto the streets. Ordering his security forces to crush the rebellion by whatever means necessary, Ceausescu underestimated the power or at least the will of the people. Not fully comprehending the danger, Ceausescu organized a rally to speak to the party faithful. As large crowds rushed the square where the Ceausescus were speaking, television crews captured the moments when Ceausescu realized his mistake. Cheers quickly turned to boos and the Ceausescus were flown to safety by helicopter only to be picked up by army units and tried on charges of genocide. The Ceausescus were found guilty, sentenced to death, and executed December 25, 1989.⁷⁷ This would in way mark the beginning of a new era in Romanian history.

F. RETURN TO EUROPE

The 1990s would come to be referred to as the “return to Europe.” While true in some aspects it is more of a slogan as the Iron Curtain was more porous than originally thought. Intellectuals never forgot what Romania had worked so hard to become and in ways, the brutal nineteenth century cemented the will to return to an independent, forward-thinking Romania. In the years following communism, there were those in power who had to adjust to a new way of life, and some who questioned, as always, which direction to turn. Nonetheless, the majority wanted to reconnect with the West and bring Romania back from the brink. Elections were held and leaders put in place to establish a prosperous democratic Romania. While corruption was rampant, the direction was clear and Romania made important steps to assure the correct path was taken. The security and economy were driving factors in steering newly elected President Iliescu toward the West.

In 1993, Romania signed the Association Agreement with the European Union, signifying a willingness of both sides to proceed toward formal membership.⁷⁸ Realizing the need to conform the Western standards of human and minority rights, Iliescu adhered to the United Nations-sponsored Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in 1994 and the Council of Europe’s Convention for the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 291.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 300.

Protection of National Minorities in 1995.⁷⁹ Iliescu also sought the protection of a security organization, but prepared to work closely with a reformed Russia. Any association with Russia had little support, as the suspicion of Russia as an enemy of Romania was increasingly popular having arisen during the first half of the nineteenth century and reinforced by the Communist experience.⁸⁰ Seeking to maintain his office and the country's present direction, Iliescu sought out the support of NATO.

1. NATO Membership

As Gheciu articulates, "accession to NATO, however, was regarded by the Central and Eastern European reformers as part of a broader process of returning to Europe and taking their place in the Euro-Atlantic community."⁸¹ Romania was left out of the first wave of enlargement in 1997, but was told that by continuing the reform process, Romania would have a good chance at securing NATO membership in the future.⁸² At the Washington Summit in 1999, NATO expanded the Planning and Review Process aimed at enhancing the Membership Action Plan. MAP laid out the systematic process of which Romania could follow to secure membership.⁸³ NATO provided a systematic process of socialization aimed at instilling Western norms into Romania's civil-military relations. A senior allied officer who participated in consultations with Romanians and the NATO framework accession process, explained to Romanians, "commitment to principles of liberal democracies helped us to leave behind problems we had had for centuries; we are living proof that if you do the right things, and if you work hard enough, you will win."⁸⁴ It is easy to imagine the impact this would have on the Romanian mindset considering their cruel history and past century of bloodshed. Romania firmly anchored itself in the Euro-Atlantic community, conforming to expectations and eagerly attending courses at the Marshall Center, NATO Defense

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Gheciu, *NATO*, 17.

⁸² Ibid., 157.

⁸³ Ibid., 159.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 168.

College, and other Partnership for Peace-related educational institutions.⁸⁵ In 1999, Romanians would be put to the test in their first mission under PFP and performed well complying with Western-defined standards.⁸⁶ After September 11, 2001, the strategic value in Romania grew and the United States was quick to seek their cooperation. Romania sent civilian experts and troops into Afghanistan and Iraq in spite of significant economic costs, costs that a rebuilding Romania could ill afford.⁸⁷ As the major European countries criticized the U.S. for its War on Terror, Romania and other former-bloc countries stepped up earning the resentment of France and other West European states.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, Romania's efforts were rewarded at the Prague Summit in 2002 with membership to NATO. While security efforts paid off, economic rebuilding was proving to be slow. Romania having begun the process of EU membership in 1993 finally was allowed accession in 2007.⁸⁹ With accession into NATO and the EU, Romania thus completed the Communist transition period and firmly stood as a European country.

G. CONCLUSION

Romania's long history is crucial to understanding not only its strategic value in the security of Europe but also its desire to contribute alongside the United States and within NATO. As stated by Bucharest University political scientist Radu Dudau, "all serious foreign policy discussion in Romania begins and ends with geography."⁹⁰ Forever caught in the middle between a powerful and culturally advancing Europe and a traditional and vast empire of Russia, Romania has always had to choose sides to survive. Through two bloody world wars and an oppressive Cold War as a member of the Warsaw Pact, Romania has emerged as a lynchpin to the Black Sea security. Crawling out of the Cold War years, Romania quickly sought improved relations from the West, especially the United States. Romanian professor Valentin Naumescu contended, "Romania...was

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 200.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 207.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Hitchins, *Romania*, 309.

⁹⁰ Kaplan, *In Europe's Shadow*, 48.

arguably the most pro-American and anti-Russian country in the Balkans and southeastern Europe.”⁹¹ Romanian efforts at democratization and modernization were rewarded with admittance to NATO in 2004 and the European Union in 2007.⁹² Considering the border nations of the Black Sea; Romania, Turkey, Bulgaria, Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine; the latter two which have waged war with Russia in the past decade, it is conceivable that Romania is worthy of a special relationship with the United States.

⁹¹ Ibid., 209.

⁹² Gheciu, *NATO*, 209.

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III. THE UNITED STATES POLICY AND INTEREST IN ROMANIA AND THE BLACK SEA

A. INTRODUCTION

The Ukrainian crisis and its 2014 Crimean annexation have renewed interest in the U.S. military's strategic value in security of the Black Sea region.⁹³ Facing a resurgent Russia combined with the unknown and often-contradictory nature of the current Trump administration, the United States military has been reinforcing ties with NATO and its allied countries.⁹⁴ Perhaps of these Eastern European countries, none is more important than the country of Romania. A wide array of operations is currently underway in Romania and around the Black Sea, demonstrating the importance of joint exercises and international cooperation through NATO. Military personnel stationed or serving in Romania must understand the historical context and cultural perspective from which Romania's desire to contribute to security originates. In an age of an ever-evolving range of military operations and responsibilities asked of the U.S. military, the citizen-soldier must be aware of the past and ready to meet the challenges of the future.

B. BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE

Among the efforts to increase presence, perhaps none is more prominent than the U.S. commitment to Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe. Emphasized in the 2017 EUCOM Posture Statement, "EUCOM continues to implement the EPAA (European Phased Adaptive Approach) to defend European NATO populations, territory, and infrastructure against ballistic missile threats from outside the Euro-Atlantic region."⁹⁵ The BMD defense architecture consists of satellites for early warning, Aegis Ashore for

⁹³ Igor Delanoe, "After the Crimean Crisis: Towards a Greater Russian Maritime Power in the Black Sea," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 14, no. 3 (2014): 379, doi:10.1080/14683857.2014.944386.

⁹⁴ Dan Lamouthe, "Mattis Attempts to Reassure NATO Allies as the Trump Administration Deals with Fallout from Flynn's Ouster," *Washington Post*, February 15, 2017, accessed May 5, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/02/15/mattis-attempts-to-reassure-nato-allies-as-the-trump-administration-deals-with-fallout-from-flynn-s-ouster/?utm_term=.5581e0a7911a.

⁹⁵ "EUCOM 2017 Posture Statement," EUCOM, last modified March 23, 2017, <http://www.eucom.mil/mission/eucom-2017-posture-statement>.

sensor and shooter in Deveselu, Romania and in 2018, Poland, BMD tracking radar in Turkey in addition to the four Aegis BMD-capable ships out of Spain.⁹⁶ When Aegis Ashore was declared operational on May 12, 2016, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the activation of the site “represents a significant increase in the capability to defend European Allies against the proliferation of ballistic missiles.”⁹⁷ Almost as old as the Alliance itself, missile defense forms the backbone of collective security to counter weapons of mass destruction in Europe

1. European Phased Adaptive Approach

The EPAA was thought to be a turning point or even possible sign of the U.S. reneging on previous commitment to European partners. As much turmoil as the decision caused it is worth noting the chain of events and reasoning behind the actions to ensure there are no misconceptions.

2. Ballistic Missile Defense under President Bush

As the United States fought wars alongside newly admitted NATO members in Iraq and Afghanistan, Iran quickly emerged as a threat to U.S. and NATO security. Iran, using a Russian-built Bushehr nuclear reactor began to develop its nuclear operations raising fears of an Iranian development program for intercontinental-range ballistic missiles.⁹⁸ President Bush made United States antimissile defense system on European soil a top priority soon after taking office and increased the growing US-Russia chasm by withdrawing from the Antiballistic Missile Treaty with Russia.⁹⁹ In 2006, President Bush proposed the establishment of antimissile sites in Poland and the Czech Republic in an

⁹⁶ The White House, “Fact Sheet on U.S. Missile Defense Policy: A ‘Phased, Adaptive Approach for Missile Defense in Europe,” September 17, 2009.

⁹⁷ North Atlantic Council, “Key Missile Defence Site Declared Operational,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified May 12, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_130721.htm.

⁹⁸ Feith and Cropsy, “Russian Reset,” 3.

⁹⁹ Michael R. Gordon, “U.S. Is Proposing European Shield for Iran Missiles,” *The New York Times*, May 22, 2006.

effort to stop would be attacks stemming from Iran against the United States and its European allies.¹⁰⁰

Not surprisingly, Russia was angered by the perceived threat so close to their homeland, and in many ways the proposed missile sites reopened Cold War wounds on both sides.¹⁰¹ Russia, perhaps justifiably, felt threatened by the NATO enlargement and was not shy to express their dissatisfaction with the status quo. Russian Houses of Parliament adopted resolutions specifically and formerly to denounce NATO expansion.¹⁰² Vladimir Putin increased his rhetoric vowing to reciprocate, and “build our defense and security policy accordingly.”¹⁰³ Despite assurances from the U.S. and NATO that the missile defense sites are set up to combat a threat from Iran, Russian defense minister Sergei Ivanov reiterated Russia’s viewpoint claiming the proposed sites in Poland and the Czech Republic will have a “negative impact on the whole Euro-Atlantic security system” adding “the choice for location for the deployment of those systems is dubious, to put it mildly.”¹⁰⁴

As the United States continued with plans for the missile sites, Russia suspended its obligations under the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, a key Cold War-era arms limitation agreement.¹⁰⁵ At the Bucharest Summit in 2008, NATO backed the U.S. plans for missile defense in Europe while at the same time rejecting the vote to admit Georgia and Ukraine into the alliance.¹⁰⁶ Soon after, Russia invaded Georgia, asserting Russia will in a former Soviet sphere of influence and seemingly sending a message to the west.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Andrew E. Kramer and Thom Shanker, “Russia Suspends Arms Agreement Over U.S. Shield,” *The New York Times*, July 14, 2007.

¹⁰² Steven Lee Myers, “As NATO Finally Arrives on its Border, Russia Grumbles,” *The New York Times*, April 3, 2004.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Kramer and Shanker, “Russia Suspends Arms Agreement.”

¹⁰⁶ Steven Erlanger and Steven Lee Myers, “NATO Backs Missile Defense in Europe, But Rejects Admitting Georgia and Ukraine,” *The New York Times*, Apr 4, 2008.

3. The Russian Reset

Soon after President Obama took office in 2004, he supposedly scrapped the missile defense plan in favor of a new missile defense option on September 17, 2009.¹⁰⁷ Critics berated the new president for caving to Russia's rhetoric in order to accomplish the goal of a Russian "reset."¹⁰⁸ In a time of transition, the Obama administration was criticized for turning their backs on the U.S.'s oldest allies in order to appease Russia. Taking office under the pretext of hope and change, President Obama sought to reestablish diplomatic relations with alleged enemies and cooperate with partners rather than seeking unilateral action. The Obama administration placed high priority on restoring Russian relations with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton famously wielding a reset button. Nonetheless, President Obama needed Russian support to enforce United Nations sanctions on Iran for violations pertaining to their nuclear program. After campaigning on a promise to support the European missile defense program, on September 17, 2009, President Obama abandoned the Bush plan for missile defense.

4. Ballistic Missile Defense under President Obama

President Obama shocked the world in the seemingly stark change of U.S. foreign policy. Domestically, critics of the newly elected Democratic Obama were appalled by his actions. Defeated Republican presidential contender Mitt Romney took the opportunity to point to Obama's naivety on Russian president, Vladimir Putin, calling the Obama's pull out "a gift to Russia."¹⁰⁹ Republicans including Senator John McCain, released statements calling Obama soft and implying he let down American allies. John Bolton, a Bush-appointed ambassador to the United Nations said Russia and Iran came away as "big winners" in a "bad day for American national security."¹¹⁰ Current Vice

¹⁰⁷ "Remarks by the President on Strengthening Missile Defense in Europe" (White House Briefing room September 17, 2009).

¹⁰⁸ Douglas J. Feith and Seth Cropsey, "How the Russian 'Reset' Explains Obama's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy*. October 16, 2012, accessed November 30, 2016. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/16/how-the-russian-reset-explains-obamas-foreign-policy/>.

¹⁰⁹ Katie Sanders, "Romney: Obama Stopped Missile Defence Shield as a Gift to Russia," *Politifact*, March 23, 2014, <http://www.politifact.com/punditfact/statements/2014/mar/23/mitt-romney/romney-obama-stopped-missile-defense-shield-gift-r/>.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

President-Elect, then Rep. of Indiana, Mike Pence lambasted Obama stating, “Only a year since Russia invaded Georgia, and 70 years to the day since the Soviet Union invaded Poland, the Obama administration is continuing its policy of appeasing adversaries at the expense of our allies.”¹¹¹

The disastrous timing of the announcement was not lost on the Poles. Eugeniusz Smolar, a former chief of Warsaw’s Centre for International Relations, said simply, “We are disappointed.”¹¹² Others took a harsher tone like Alexander Vondra, a former Czech deputy Prime Minister and ambassador to Washington who was heavily involved in the negotiations on the missile defense sites, said in surprise, “This is a U-turn in U.S. policy; first we expect the U.S. to honour its commitments, if they don’t they may have problems generating support for Afghanistan and on other things.”¹¹³ *Foreign Policy* contributors Douglas Feith and Seth Cropsey summarized the feelings of many involved stating, “the president embarrassed their pro-American leaders, hurt the NATO alliance, showed weakness toward Russia, deemphasized the importance of missile defense, and called America’s word into question.”¹¹⁴ President Obama even sent a letter to Russian President Medvedev, stating he would reevaluate the missile defense program.¹¹⁵ President Obama appeared to have caved to Russia’s aggression in order to receive its support against Iran.

Critics of the Obama administration’s EPAA argued that Obama turned his back on America’s partners in Europe, specifically Poland and the Czech Republic, and furthermore that Obama was using the new proposal to appease Russia. Contrary to the reports that implied the Czech Republic and Polish governments and leaders were eagerly awaiting their new missile defense partnership with the US, internal political differences

¹¹¹ Robert Farley, “Did Obama Flip on Whether he Would Continue to Pursue a Missile Shield in Poland?” *Politifact*, September 22, 2009.

¹¹² Luke Harding and Ian Traynor, “Obama Abandons Missile Defence Shield in Europe,” *The Guardian*, accessed November 10, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/17/missile-defence-shield-barack-obama>.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Feith and Cropsey, “The Russian ‘Reset.’” 6.

¹¹⁵ “Press Briefing by Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, March 3, 2009” The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/print.php?pid=85841>.

kept both the Poles and Czechs from ratifying their respective agreements. In Poland, following snap elections held on October 21, 2007, Poles replaced the current party with a right two party coalition led by Donald Tusk. Tusk indicated that “his government would not be as compliant toward the United States...and that it would seek to bargain more actively on missile defense.”¹¹⁶ While talks continued, Tusk wanted more assets and refused to sign the accord.

The missile defense issue was even more complicated in the Czech Republic. On March 24, 2009, the ruling coalition failed a no-confidence vote resulting in Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek offering his government’s resignation.¹¹⁷ An interim government was reluctant to make any agreements until a new government could be elected. Polls showed a strong opposition (60%-70%) to the missile defense plan. Considering their history of Nazi occupation and Soviet governance, the public was resistant to the stationing of any foreign troops on their soil.¹¹⁸

To read to the headlines and listen to opponents of the Obama administration, one would think President Obama took office and immediately crumpled up plans for European missile defense and threw them in the wastebasket of the Oval Office. Looking back, it is evident that he merely steered the program into a direction that it was slowly heading through its development. Missile defense has been a priority for American presidents since the invention of the missiles in the 1950s, increasing substantially with threats from Russia. The U.S. has spent over \$120 Billion in the first 50 years of missile defense programs. In just the time period from 2002 to 2008, President Bush’s Missile Defense Agency spent over \$57 Billion.¹¹⁹ After the initial proposal, the Department of Defense Missile Defense Agency conducted simulations as to the effectiveness of the long-range missile defense system. Tests conducted showed substantial issues with the capabilities and effectiveness of the missile defense program.

¹¹⁶ Steven A. Hildreth and Carl Ek, “Long-Range Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe,” (Congressional Research Service September 23, 2009): 10.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 14.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹¹⁹ Richard Dean Burns, “The Missile Defense Systems of George W. Bush: A Critical Assessment” *Praeger Security International* (2010): 138.

Observers noted that a medium to short-range interceptor might be more appropriate to be based in Europe.¹²⁰ In addition to issues of the appropriate range, the timeline of Iranian missile development was misjudged. Gary Samore, vice president of the MacArthur Foundation and former aide at the National Security Council asserted, “As far as I can tell, Iran is many years away from having the capability to deliver a military strike against the U.S.” In line with this thinking, the Bush proposal would not bring systems online until “at least 2017, and likely much later” claimed Gates.¹²¹ Then Defense Officials realized the Iranian Government was in favor developing short to medium range missiles and may do so at a much faster pace than previously thought.

In a *New York Times* Op-Ed, and later in his memoirs, Robert Gates, a Secretary of Defense under Bush and Obama told the history and evolution of the missile defense plan. Days after taking over as SECDEF in December 2006, Gates recommended to Bush the proposal for the missile defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic. According to Gates,

this system was designed to identify and destroy up to five long-range missiles potentially armed with nuclear warheads fired from the Middle East—the greatest and most likely danger being from Iran. At the time, it was the best plan based on the technology and threat assessment available.¹²²

Considering the new information available from Iranian experts in the Defense Department, coupled with failed American tests of the new technology and equipment proposed to intercept Iranian missiles, new plans were to be considered. The House Armed Services Committee cited this concern in the FY2008 Defense Authorization Bill and further directed two studies: (1) The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State were required to submit a report to Congress on alternative missile defense capabilities such as Aegis could contribute to the missile defense protection and Europe and (2) that

¹²⁰ Steven A. Hildreth and Carl Ek, “Long-Range Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe,” (Congressional Research Service September 23, 2009): 7.

¹²¹ Robert M. Gates, “A Better Missile Defense for A Safer Europe,” *The New York Times*, September 19, 2009.

¹²² Ibid.

an independent assessment of European missile defense options should be done in a timely manner.¹²³

The very next year the Senate Armed Services Committee approved its version of the FY2009 Defense Authorization Bill. The committee provided full funding with specific stipulations to be met before funds were to be expended: (1) Polish and Czech governments ratified the agreements to set up missile defense sites, (2) SECDEF proved to Congress that the proposed interceptor program demonstrated high probability of accomplishing its mission.¹²⁴

In June of 2009, the House Armed Services Committee reserved funds for the missile defense project for one of two purposes: (1) either SECDEF continue with the current program until operationally effective or (2) the SECDEF pursue an alternative program with the stipulation that

this option is conditional on certification from the Secretary of Defense that the alternative is consistent with NATO efforts to address ballistic missile defense threats, that any alternative addresses ballistic missile threats to Europe in a prioritized manner that includes the level of imminence of the threat and level of risk, and that any alternative be cost-effective, technically reliable and operationally available in protecting Europe and the United States.¹²⁵

Resulting from ongoing investigations during the Bush Presidency considering the excessive costs and unproven capabilities, Secretary Gates proposed a new plan to President Obama.

5. A Better Missile Defense for a Safer Europe

In 2009, in the Obama Presidency, it was again Gates who proposed to the president a new plan, urging him to change course. “I sincerely believed the new program was better, more in accord with the political realities in Europe and more effective against

¹²³ “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008,” 238–240.

¹²⁴ “Senate Armed Forces Committee Defense Authorization Bill S.3001.”

¹²⁵ “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009.”

the emerging Iranian threat.”¹²⁶ In this light, Gates claimed, “we are strengthening, not scrapping, missile defense in Europe.”¹²⁷ Gates proposed a plan to utilize the proven and well-established Aegis weapons system as a cornerstone of what would be called a European Phased Adaptive Approach starting with stationing U.S. Aegis ships in Rota, Spain, setting up an Aegis Ashore missile defense site in Romania and later in Poland, and also putting an X-Band Radar in Turkey. Poland was overjoyed to accept the U.S. offer on the missile shield. Mariusz Handzlik, the chief foreign policy advisor to the Polish president, exclaimed, “The elements of the new missile defense system will be based in Poland; this is very important for Poland, for NATO and the U.S., above all, this is about the long term strategic cooperation between the U.S. and Poland.”¹²⁸ While the policy change required a recalibration of expectations and efforts, it has in no way left Europe without security and a strong American partnership.

President Obama agreed with Bush that Iran’s ballistic missile program posed a significant threat, yet adapted the proposal for technology “that best responds to the threats that we face and that utilize technology that is both proven and cost-effective.”¹²⁹ Because the approach is phased and adaptive, Obama argued that it offered the flexibility to deal with new threats and adjust as “the threat and technology continue to evolve.”¹³⁰ It was thus; with a new plan using tried and true, technology was able to stand up facilities years before the previous proposal had planned with Romanian Aegis ashore coming online in December of 2015.

6. A Different Leader among Domestic Constraints

President Obama took office amid world turmoil. Relieved of his office in January 2017, he became the first American president to serve both terms of his

¹²⁶ Robert Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, 2014), 107.

¹²⁷ Gates, “Missile Defense.”

¹²⁸ Judy Dempsey, “Poland to Accept U.S. Offer on Shield,” *The New York Times*, October 21 2009.

¹²⁹ President Barrack Obama, “Remarks by the President on Strengthening Missile Defense in Europe Remarks” (Speech given in Diplomatic Reception Room of White House, September 17, 2009).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

presidency at war. When he took office though, his goal was to regain an acceptable order of peace. President Obama's administration sought to "reduce the defense budget, refresh U.S. foreign policy, and concentrate his time and energy on his domestic agenda."¹³¹ Ballistic Missile Defense was not a policy priority for the Obama Presidency, in fact, "the administration's approach to the issue would be 'pragmatic,' and depend upon balancing other priorities."¹³² Pursuing a more humble approach to missile programs and defense, the administration sought to reengage Russia and agree to a New START treaty to reduce arms, something that had expired under the Bush administration.

President Obama viewed the world much more different from his predecessor, President Bush. Whereas Bush could be categorized as pessimistic and willing to go-it-alone in battles waged on terrorism, Obama was optimistic and determined to use diplomatic efforts to ease tensions. "Obama had made it clear in 2008 in response to a series of missile tests by Iran that he saw 'direct and aggressive diplomacy,' not missile defense, as the primary means to deal with rogue states."¹³³ In his speech in Prague on nuclear disarmament, Obama made it clear that he was changing course to back down from altercations and not seek them out. Exemplifying the stark difference in leadership President Obama was recognized as the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009.

President Obama, with his goals of diplomacy and peace though, could not afford to look weak on defense, as Republicans would point out, or to disappoint European allies. At the same time, he could not disappoint his own party as "democrats in congress remained firmly against expanded BMD deployment."¹³⁴ Admitting during his speech announcing the change to the missile defense program that missiles are a threat to Europe, President Obama did not abandon the program, stating, "We have restructured our test program to improve confidence in the missile defense capabilities under development and ensure that the capabilities transferred to the war-fighter are

¹³¹ Andrew Futter, *Ballistic Missile Defence and U.S. National Security Policy: Normalisation and Acceptance after the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 134.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 138.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 58.

operationally effective, suitable and survivable.”¹³⁵ Moreover, rather than bilateral agreements with Poland and the Czech Republic, the new proposal would encompass all of NATO, strengthen the coalition and American ties in Europe, including a budding relationship with an eager Romania.

The theory seems strongest in the arguments that the proposed missile defense system was simply better, more cost effective, proven technologically, and a faster solution to the Iranian missile threat. It seems President Obama, while not campaigning on missile defense, found the best compromise. He pleased democrats by utilizing a more cost-effective solution, and calmed Republican fears by merely updating and improving, not scrapping the missile defense sites. Moreover, European allies that claimed to be insulted clearly had their own domestic politics to deal with, but Poland overcame, and Romania was more than willing to take on the American base.

C. MILITARY OPERATIONS 2014–2017

Despite the Pivot to the Pacific and ongoing unrest in the Middle East, attention is being refocused to Europe, home to America’s oldest allies and most influential alliance, NATO.¹³⁶ General Curtis M. Scaparrotti is dual-hatted as the Commander of the United States European Command and NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe; a distinction and responsibility not found in any other geographic combatant command. General Scaparrotti reaffirmed the role of the United States and NATO, stating “the resurgence of Russia, with its aggressive global power interests, European Command has had to adapt to a new reality of instability and uncertainty, forcing us to examine our partnerships and relationships with the 51 countries within the command’s area of responsibility.”¹³⁷ As a leader of not only the U.S. in Europe but of all European allies, General Scaparrotti has significant responsibility to uphold unity of command. This is difficult to accomplish in joint U.S. military operations, and even more challenging and

¹³⁵ Ibid., 141.

¹³⁶ Ray Maybus, “A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower.”

¹³⁷ “Transcript of Hearing on Theater Assessment and European Reassurance Initiative Progress,” last modified May 4, 2017, <http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/transcript/35687/transcript-of-hearing-on-theater-assessment-and-european-reassurance-initiative-progress>.

crucial to obtain in a multinational setting. To achieve a common objective “where the commander may not control all elements, he seeks cooperation and builds consensus to achieve unity of effort.”¹³⁸

1. European Reassurance Initiative

EUCOM’s engagement under the Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative “contributed greatly to the development of better-trained peacekeeping forces among Eastern European countries.”¹³⁹ After attention shifted in 2001 to CENTCOM, AFRICOM and PACOM, and with Russia taking advantage of the decreased western presence, the U.S. needed to reemphasize the commitment to Europe. To reassure NATO Allies and partners President Obama proposed the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) June 3, 2014.¹⁴⁰ With a budget of \$3.42 billion for 2017, ERI clearly demonstrates the strong commitment to territorial integrity of U.S. Allies and to maintaining a strong and peaceful Europe.¹⁴¹ To ensure the success of European peacekeeping operations, EUCOM implemented five elements of the ERI: increased rotational presence of forces, increased bilateral and multilateral exercises, improved infrastructure, enhanced prepositioning, and intensified efforts to build partner capacity.¹⁴² In 2017 alone, the budget allows for 28 joint and multi-national exercises, training more than 18,000 U.S. personnel alongside 45,000 NATO Allies and PfP personnel. One of many operations in Romania, the deployment of the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade brings U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopters to support and train Romanian forces.¹⁴³ ERI funds enable further operations under the umbrella of European security.

¹³⁸ Joint Publication 3–08, Interagency Cooperation Joint Operations, 29 (June 24, 2011).

¹³⁹ George Oliver, “Evolution of International and UN Peacekeeping,” United States Naval War College, 2013, 14–15.

¹⁴⁰ “ERI Fact Sheet” last modified January 5, 2017, www.eucom.mil/media-library/document/35544/eri-fact-sheet.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Andrew Pestano, “US Army Black Hawks Reach Romania for NATO Support Operations,” *United Press International*, March 3, 2017, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2017/03/03/US-Army-Black-Hawks-reach-Romania-for-NATO-support-operation/4581488553506/.

2. Operation Atlantic Resolve

One of the major operations funded by ERI is Operation Atlantic Resolve (OAR) with the purpose of “strengthening capabilities and sustaining readiness through bilateral and multinational training and exercises.”¹⁴⁴ While remaining under U.S. Command, these forces integrate tightly with U.S. partners and signal an ongoing commitment to security by way of prepositioned personnel and equipment. In Romania, the Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base hosts a mission command capability to ensure a persistent and continuous presence in the Black Sea region. Additionally, Romanian and U.S. armored crewmembers took part in live fire training exercises at the Smardan Training Area. The exercise, “involving armored infantry and artillery elements... [demonstrated] the mobility of both armies as they worked together to fire on multiple targets.”¹⁴⁵ U.S. Major General John Gronski, deputy-commanding general for the Army National Guard in attendance, observed that “outstanding soldiers conducting tough and realistic training and working together.”¹⁴⁶ Under OAR, infrastructure allows for increased exercises. Exercise Resolute Castle, the Romanian-focused arm of OAR, strengthens engineering units working side-by-side breaking ground on a new foundation that will enhance the Joint National Training Center in Cincu, Romania.¹⁴⁷ OAR is a significant step forward allowing for increased presence through coordination on a multinational stage.

3. Readiness Action Plan

In September 2014, at the Wales Summit, NATO took another step forward by upgrading its NATO Response Force (NRF) recognizing the threat of hybrid warfare. Under the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), NATO is upgrading its capabilities to address weaknesses and threats at the Southern and Eastern flanks.¹⁴⁸ Using a Very High

¹⁴⁴ “OAR Fact Sheet” last modified January 4, 2017, www.eucom.mil/doc/35545/oar-fact-sheet.

¹⁴⁵ “US-Romania Train Armored Artillery Through Adversity,” EUCOM, accessed May 8, 2017, <http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/article/35633/us-romania-train-armored-artillery-through-adversity>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ “Seabees Lay the Foundation in Romania,” EUCOM, accessed May 8, 2017, <http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/article/35678/seabees-lay-the-foundation-in-romania>.

¹⁴⁸ Sinan Ulgan and Can Kasapoglu, “A Threat-Based Strategy for NATO’s Southern Flank,” *Carnegie Europe*, (June 2016): 6–7.

Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) structure, NATO will have on hand “dynamic forces comprised of five maneuver battalions (around 5,000 troops) supported by maritime, air, and special forces elements.”¹⁴⁹ At the core of this concept are NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs), which will play a crucial role in combating hybrid warfare.¹⁵⁰ Eight units are designed to “enable a rapid-reaction force deployment and a fast military buildup on the Eastern Flank” to deter or defeat Russian aggression.¹⁵¹ Headquarters for the NFIUs are split between Poland for the North with Multinational Division Southeast located in Bucharest, Romania. With the RAP so popular among allies, it was agreed upon at the 2016 Warsaw Summit to further strengthen the Alliance’s deterrence and defense posture with Enhanced Forward Presence (EfP).¹⁵²

4. Enhanced Forward Presence

A major facet of the EfP is naval presence on the Black Sea. While limited by the Montreux Convention terms of 21 days for non-Black Sea powers, the U.S. frequently conducts freedom of navigation operations and joint exercises maintaining a presence for Allies and deterrence for Russia. The ships’ operations are meant to “enhance maritime security, stability, readiness, and strengthen partnerships.”¹⁵³ Ships are frequently met by Russian jets and have recently made headlines for close encounters at sea under dangerous conditions.¹⁵⁴ U.S. vessels operating in the Black Sea include the 6th Fleet command ship, *USS Mount Whitney*, one of only two seaborne joint command vessels, further emphasizing the importance of the mission and area.¹⁵⁵ The four U.S. Navy Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) capable destroyers stationed in Rota, Spain make

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² “Readiness Action Plan,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified January 25, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_119353.htm?selectedLocale=en.

¹⁵³ “Mount Whitney in the Black Sea,” EUCOM, last modified October 12, 2016, <http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/article/35495/mount-whitney-in-the-black-sea>.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas Gibbons-Neff, “In First Under Trump, Russian Jets Buzzed a U.S. Destroyer at Close Range,” *Washington Post*, February 14, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/02/14/in-first-under-trump-russian-jets-buzzed-a-u-s-destroyer-at-close-range/?utm_term=.0f4bbeb79ffa.

¹⁵⁵ “Mount Whitney in the Black Sea,” EUCOM.

frequent patrols of the Black Sea.¹⁵⁶ Under exercises such as Sea Breeze 2016, an annual exercise for the past 15 years held in the Black Sea, the destroyers “conduct the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with allied, joint, and interagency partners, in order to advance U.S. national interest and security and stability in Europe.”¹⁵⁷ To offset the limitation by the Montreux Convention, at the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit, Romania proposed for a permanent Black Sea Fleet under the Black Sea Initiative. The proposal called for a multinational flotilla and increased naval patrols and joint exercises in the Black Sea.¹⁵⁸ While the proposal was tabled for now, it only proves the willingness of U.S. allies to increase presence and cooperation in response to Russian aggression.

D. CONCLUSION

Europe will continue to be an important ally for the U.S. and the U.S. must continue to strengthen and reinforce the relationship. Much has transpired in regard to the increase in attention afforded to Europe. Romania has emerged as a wholehearted partner for the U.S. and a thriving ally within NATO. General Scaparrotti’s increased focus on building relationships appears likely to continue as long as Russia remains the antagonists. During the current Trump administration, the relationship with Russia has become murky to say the least. The same Republicans berating President Obama over turning his back on European Allies are silent as President Trump sows doubt in the future of the Euro-Atlantic alliance.

¹⁵⁶ “First of Four U.S. Navy Ships to Support NATO Ballistic Missile Defense Arrives in Spain,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified February 13, 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_106997.htm.

¹⁵⁷ “USS Ross Conducts Port Visit to Odessa Ukraine,” EUCOM, last modified July 28, 2016, <http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/article/35417/uss-ross-conducts-port-visit-to-odessa-ukraine>.

¹⁵⁸ “A New Balance of Power in The Black Sea?” *CACI Analyst*, September 15, 2015, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13393-a-new-balance-of-power-in-the-black-sea?.html>.

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IV. RUSSIAN PERCEPTIONS IN THE BLACK SEA

A. INTRODUCTION

The Western and Russian relationship stands at a crossroads. Down one path is the status quo of uneasy peace; down the other path is a return to armed animosity. The United States and Russia relationship is in troubled with geopolitical disharmony as tenuous as it has been since the days of McCarthyism, with suspicions held and accusations hurled by all parties involved.¹⁵⁹ The European project is cracking, showing signs of its fragility with Brexit in 2016 and the parties of the radical right gaining traction that has not been tangible since World War II. Russia, led by the Vladimir Putin, is resurgent in its aggressiveness and military might. Not since the Cold War has Russia concentrated on building up its military and arsenals at the current pace.¹⁶⁰ In the middle is the Black Sea, what appears to be, quite literally, the front lines of a renewed conflict between the West and Russia. Recent increases in American military presence and NATO exercises have led to narrow escapes on the Black Sea and in the air above.¹⁶¹ In the United States, one is usually only given the American side of the story.¹⁶² With headlines of Russian connections in the government coming out seemingly each new day, it is more important than ever to understand the adversary and background in order to examine the situation in the proper context. Why is presence in the Black Sea so vital to Russian national interest, so much as to annex Crimea in the first border-change by force since World War II?¹⁶³ To answer the aforementioned question, one must understand the

¹⁵⁹ "Moscow Says Plans to Create NATO's Black Sea Flotilla Undermine Regional Security," *TASS*, April 27, 2016, <http://tass.com/politics/872870>.

¹⁶⁰ Alex Williamson, "From Cold War to Hot War," *The Economist*, February 12, 2015, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21643220-russias-aggression-ukraine-part-broader-and-more-dangerous-confrontation>.

¹⁶¹ "Russian Planes, U.S. Warship Have Close Encounter Near Crimea," *CNN Politics*, last modified June 1, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/01/politics/russia-plane-navy-uss-ross/>.

¹⁶² "Is Western Media Coverage of the Ukraine Coverage Anti-Russian?" *The Guardian*, last modified August 4, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/04/western-media-coverage-ukraine-crisis-russia>.

¹⁶³ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, (London: Chatham House 2015), Kindle Location 150.

history and motivations of Russia do concern the Black Sea. Only then, can one remain unbiased and look at the issue through a calmer lens without accelerating down the wrong path.

B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Putin said, “We are against... NATO’s ruling to roost near our fence, next to our houses or on our historical territories.”¹⁶⁴ As political scientist Robert Nalbandov ascertained, “This sentence, and the whole speech, is the epitome of fear-based rationales in Russian foreign policy behavior.”¹⁶⁵ But what determines these deeply imprinted notions of what constitutes Russian territory or their self-proclaimed sphere of influence? Author Robert Gildea refers to this belief as “an ideology of blood and soil.”¹⁶⁶ This irredentist ideology is key to Putin’s strategic vision governing foreign relations and forms a frequently utilized rationalization of Russian aggressiveness. This policy is more than cheap propaganda and should not be quickly dismissed as an archaic justification. It plays so well to the Russian people because it truly is a part of the shared history of Eastern Europeans. A nation cannot be easily defined by its present borders drawn by the victors of the last war. Nationhood is made up of various cultural factors: common ancestry and descent, religion, a shared language, as well as geographical and military considerations.¹⁶⁷

1. Common Ancestry

The need to create a Russian nationhood relies on the ability to pull away people in Eurasia from the West and into Russian influence through a common ancestry and descent. Historian Evgeny Kozhokin advocated for “the historically legitimate national identity that recognized ‘the Eurasian essence of Russia as a definitive civilizational

¹⁶⁴ Robert Nalbandov, *Not By Bread Alone: Russian Foreign Policy Under Putin* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), Kindle Location 1405.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Robert Gildea, *Barricades and Borders: Europe 1800–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 310.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

phenomenon.”¹⁶⁸ Much of the Russian identity draws from the relationship and differences with the West. As Russian political scientist Igor Zevelev argues, “the roots of the current discussion on Russian identity can be traced back to the nineteenth-century debates between Slavophiles and Westernizers.”¹⁶⁹ Emphasizing a unique character of Russian civilization, Slavophiles developed a universal character of Russian identity made up of all Slavic peoples.¹⁷⁰ Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky, touted Russian “openness, inclusiveness, and messianism” and Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, wanted to “understand and include the entire European culture into the Russian soul.”¹⁷¹

The commonality of culture was not just ideas but was formulated by the doctrine of official nationalism.¹⁷² An empire of multinational people was cultivated with loyalty to the monarch, state, and church; not encouraged but demanded.¹⁷³ Gathering territories under the Russian umbrella allowed the Russian national identity to be about creating a balance to the imperial western European ambitions. Russia viewed their special role in European and global history, not as separate identities but as an intertwined people with shared historical legacies different from those of the West.¹⁷⁴

2. Religious Ties

Much of the sense of unity among Russian people concerns the orthodox religion. When Putin referenced the Ukrainian affair, he spoke of religion, “It was thanks to this spiritual unity [in Crimea] that our forefathers for the first time and forevermore saw themselves as a united nation.”¹⁷⁵ Putin went so far as to compare Crimea’s “sacred

¹⁶⁸ Anne L. Clunan, “Historical Aspirations and the Domestic Politics of Russia’s Pursuit of International Status,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* (2014): 285.

¹⁶⁹ Igor Zevelev, “Russian National Identity and Foreign Policy,” *CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program* (2016): 4.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Gildea, *Barricades and Borders*, 69.

¹⁷⁴ Sergey Lavrov, “Russia’s Foreign Policy: Historical Background,” *Russia in Global Affairs* (March 2016).

¹⁷⁵ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, Kindle location 4301.

importance for Russia” to the likes of Temple Mount for followers of Islam and Judaism.¹⁷⁶ It was in Crimea that Grand Prince Vladimir was baptized, signaling the turn to Russian Christianity.¹⁷⁷ Of course, religions changed over time, and followers were forcefully converted, ousted, or even killed. In 1833, Tsarist Russia implemented an official ideology of “Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and Nationality” using them as “principles of exclusion that justified persecuting Ukrainians.”¹⁷⁸

Conversely, the Orthodox Church has undergone turbulent times. During the Soviet period, all religion was banned as “opium for the masses” with the Communist regime executing as much as 95 percent of the clergy.¹⁷⁹ Putin now uses religion as an instrument in depicting Russia as superior in its virtues as compared to the morally bankrupt West.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, this justification gives Russian’s annexation of Crimea a convincing sense of legitimacy. As historian Robert Nalbandov, articulates, Russia has “institutionalized the unilateral Russian vision of its own place in the world justified by divine revelation.”¹⁸¹

3. Linguistic Links

Religious unity was closely interconnected to a common language, necessary in religious texts and teachings. Language is one of the clearest examples of unity in a population. Speaking the same tongue breaks down communication barriers and gives society a common identity. The fabric of society is built upon the ability to talk to one another not just in speech but also in literature, the arts, religious practices, and passed down fables of ancestry; it influences every aspect of society. As Zevelev states, “Russian language and literature are viewed in the Kremlin as the tools to preserve national identity, ‘what makes us unique, our own character and traditions...the historic continuity and the links between different generations...for Russians this is a question of

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Zevelev, “Russian National Identity,” 10.

¹⁷⁸ Gildea, *Barricades and Borders*, 81.

¹⁷⁹ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, Kindle location 656.

¹⁸⁰ Lo, *Russian Disorder*, Kindle location 34.

¹⁸¹ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, Kindle location 4310.

being and remaining Russian.’”¹⁸² Gildea called language “the defining ingredient” in national identity.¹⁸³

Yet, like religion, language is not an innocuous tapestry made over time; it is a forcefully woven aspect of society imposed upon by the dominant nationality of the period. The development of modern language and literature was not an easy transition. Since the Byzantine period, the Russian written language was Church Slavonic. Then in 1783, the Russian Academy based its new literary language on the vernacular instead, in attempts to compete with the French.¹⁸⁴ Grammar was introduced in 1789 and 1794, and eventually a dictionary in 1802.¹⁸⁵ Russia imposed their language on their territories in a process called “Russification,” using elementary schools in Poland to teach the Russian tongue.¹⁸⁶ While this was common Russian policy, it was more severe in Ukraine than anywhere else, with Russians “banning the use of Ukrainian language and dialects in the western provinces.”¹⁸⁷ Russian nationalists made common practice of denying Ukrainian language and culture altogether. Since Ukraine is considered “a core and the birthplace of Russian identity,” the ethnic uniqueness of Ukrainians must be denied for fear of devaluing the Russian identity.¹⁸⁸ While Russia deliberately cultivates the spread of Russian language, it simultaneously uses the shared language as a link for all Russian people. Putin expertly exploits the common use of language; according to journalist and Putin critic Masha Gessen, “Putin showed that he ‘intends to save the world from the West; he has started with Crimea; when he says he is protecting ethnic Russians in Ukraine, he means he is protecting them from the many terrible things that come from the West.’”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸² Zevelev, “Russian National Identity,” 9.

¹⁸³ Gildea, *Barricades and Borders*, 106.

¹⁸⁴ Gildea, *Barricades and Borders*, 106.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 325.

¹⁸⁷ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, Kindle location 4047.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., Kindle location 4058.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., Kindle location 1396.

4. Land and Resources

Alongside the argument of a common people or blood, Russia maintains that there is a common soil. The appreciation of a homeland, with its natural beauties and resources, is engrained in the Russian identity.¹⁹⁰ Ukraine and Crimea occupy a significant distinction on the hierarchy of Russian frontiers as the birthplace of the Slavic identity and cradle of the future Russian empire.¹⁹¹ Additionally, Crimea allowed the Russian empire lucrative access to the Mediterranean through the Black Sea in order to build up their marine based foreign trade.¹⁹² As political scientist Halford Mackinder, presented in his “Heartland” theory, Russia has been engaged in energy politics supplying fossil fuel products in a bid for economic and political influence.¹⁹³ Russia is one of the world’s largest energy producers with 87.2 billion barrels of oil reserves.¹⁹⁴ The EU attempted to establish an entity with Black Sea surrounding states to better manage the economic relationship and trade deals with Black Sea Synergy (BSS). Russia’s “lack of interest and involvement” has hindered BSS development and effectiveness.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, Russia insisted that the BSS operate on an equal basis with the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), an organization already in existence before EU expansion.¹⁹⁶ Russia owns the bulk of the supply but also aims to control the distribution and trade networks. As Mackinder stated, “who controls the export routes controls the oil and gas; who control the oil and gas controls the Heartland,” with the Heartland being Europe.¹⁹⁷ Aside from merely trade routes and ports, Russia is expected to claim not only Crimea’s, but also Ukraine’s continental shelf and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), expanding their claims to the territory and trade

¹⁹⁰ Gildea, *Barricades and Borders*, 310.

¹⁹¹ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, Kindle location 4018.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, Kindle location 4668.

¹⁹³ Halford Mackinder, “The Geographic Pivot of History,” *The Geographic Journal* 170 (1904):298.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 5624.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 6500.

conducted within it.¹⁹⁸ Crimea and the Black Sea have come to hold a type of romantic fixture in Russian identity, but more tangible than that, they hold a place of significant economic importance and security.

C. THE BLACK SEA FLEET

The western shores of the Russian empire were vital to ensure Russian Naval access to the Mediterranean. Russian's territorial expansion was fundamental to their ability to operate out of a warm water port that would remain open year round. If Russia aims to compete with the West, historically, and especially present day with the wars in Afghanistan and Syria, presence on the Mediterranean is crucial. As far back to the 16th century, Russia waged campaigns with the Ottoman Empire for access to the Black Sea.¹⁹⁹ Russia gained control of the Black Sea Coast, including Crimea, in 1739, with the Treaty of Belgrade.²⁰⁰ However, the London Straits Convention of 1841 closed the straits to warships in times of peace, limiting Russia's capacity of power projection.²⁰¹ The battle to regain Russia's control over the Black Sea culminated in defeat in the Crimean War of 1853–56, resulting in the 1856 Treaty at Paris removing Russia's right to hold a fleet in the Black Sea.²⁰²

World War I saw additional battles between the Ottomans and Russians. A major buildup in the interwar period made for various confrontations in World War II in the Siege of Odessa and the Battle of Sevastopol.²⁰³ During the Soviet period, the Black Sea transformed into a battleground for influence between the Soviets and the West with the accession of Turkey into NATO in 1952.²⁰⁴ With the advent of nuclear weapons and the missile build up with the United States, Russia would begin a period of neglect with the

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., Kindle location 4288.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., Kindle location 4669.

²⁰⁰ Andrei P. Tsygankov, *The Strong State in Russia: Development and Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Kindle location 43.

²⁰¹ Gildea, *Barricades and Borders*, 180.

²⁰² Ibid., 182.

²⁰³ John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad* (London: Cassel Military, 2003), 205.

²⁰⁴ Gheciu, *NATO*, 43.

Black Sea Fleet. No longer was this regional area strategically important in the age of the space race and nuclear deterrence. With the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union, Sevastopol would fall under the control of the former Soviet state, Ukraine.²⁰⁵

In 1997, Ukraine and Russia signed the Partition Treaty in order to minimize disputes over the joint operation of ports.²⁰⁶ Under the 1997 bilateral treaty, Russia also agreed to lease Sevastopol from Ukraine for \$98 million annually for 20 years until 2017.²⁰⁷ In 2010, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and Russian President Dimitri Medvedev agreed to extend the lease until 2042 and ratified the Kharkiv Pact.²⁰⁸ Russia unilaterally terminated the previous treaty on March 31, 2014, after the accession of Crimea into the Russia Federation earlier in the month.²⁰⁹ Since then, Russia has completely taken back the base at Sevastopol and has begun a revitalization of the region.

D. PRESENT AGGRESSION: 2014–2017

Since 2014, naval presence has increased exponentially, resulting in aggressive interactions on the Black Sea. Both Russia and the West have increased their rhetoric in words and action while competing for prominence in a strategically significant area, with NATO on the western shores and Russia on the eastern. NATO allies among the littoral states of the Black Sea include Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey. Russia and the two countries that Russia has engaged in wars with in the past decade; Ukraine and Georgia, who were denied NATO admittance at the 2008 Bucharest Summit, are the other littoral states on the Black Sea. Keeping the previous information in mind, it is understandable to see the Black Sea as a battleground of influence between Russia and NATO.

While examining interactions and build-ups by NATO and Russia in the Black Sea, it is important to understand the governing multilateral treaty signed in 1936 at the

²⁰⁵ Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 600.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Lo, *Russian Disorder*, Kindle location 109.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ “State Duma Approves Denunciation of Russian-Ukrainian Agreements on Black Sea Fleet,” TASS: Russia News Agency, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://tass.com/russia/725964>.

Montreux Convention.²¹⁰ Limited in their deployment, “vessels of war belonging to non-Black Sea Powers shall not remain in the Black Sea more than twenty-one days, whatever be the object of their presence there.”²¹¹ This is not merely a paper tiger but has been enforced in the past. Turkey enforced the treaty against the West “to prevent the deployment of NATO’s Operation Active Endeavour in the Black Sea; Turkey abided strictly by the terms of Montreux and even reportedly denied access to two large U.S. hospital ships.”²¹² Although limited to a stay of 21 days in the Black Sea, the United States has continued to send ships into the area as a show of force to deter Russian aggression and show support to NATO allies. The U.S. Secretary of the Navy stated, “We’re going to deter, that’s the main reason we’re there is to deter Russian aggression.”²¹³

While continuing United States presence on the Black Sea, U.S. Navy ships have been repeatedly subject to aggressive actions by Russia in what appears to be a show of force and disagreement over the purpose of the U.S. Navy’s deployments. The United States Navy released a video of Russian jets buzzing the *USS Ross*, in the Black Sea in 2015.²¹⁴ The video and accompanying article showed six Russian Su-24 jets flying within 500 meters of the American destroyer. Defense Secretary Ash Carter warned, “we are looking at Russian activities, at the activities of separatists; it’s a serious possibility and a serious danger,” maintaining that any actions of the West are in self-defense of progressively aggressive actions by Russia.²¹⁵ Provocative actions have continued on the part of the Russians, and as recent as February 2017, Russian jets buzzed *USS Porter*, in what many said were attempts to test the new Trump administration.²¹⁶

²¹⁰ Nalbandov, *Not by Bread Alone*, Kindle location 8168.

²¹¹ Ibid., Kindle location 8156.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ “US to Russia: We’re Staying in the Black Sea,” *Business Insider*, last modified June 17, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-us-says-it-will-stay-in-black-sea-despite-russian-warning-2016-6>.

²¹⁴ “Russian Planes, U.S. Warship Have Close Encounter near Crimea,” CNN Politics, last modified June 1, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/01/politics/russia-plane-navy-uss-ross/>.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Christine Hauser, “Trump, the Russia Ship and Suspicious Minds,” *The New York Times*, February 16, 2016.

The West maintains the line that NATO and U.S. need to show unity and support in order to defend against Russia. The U.S. upholds their presence stating, “operations aim to enhance maritime security and stability, readiness, and naval capability with our allies and partners.”²¹⁷

The U.S. is not alone in its defense against Russian aggression, receiving considerable support from other NATO nations. Romania, hosting the U.S. missile defense base in Deveselu, is a major proponent of increased naval exercises of NATO allies. Romania brought the proposal, Black Sea Initiative, to the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit calling for a permanent Black Sea Fleet.²¹⁸ The proposal called for a multinational flotilla, naval patrols and joint exercises in the Black Sea. Author Natalia Konarzewska of Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst, praised the important steps taken but concluded they “will not entail a significant change in the existing imbalance of power vis-à-vis Russia in the Black Sea Region; NATO’s proposed collective activities in the region do not match Russia’s growing military posture.”²¹⁹ With Russia increasing their presence around the Black Sea, it appears NATO is behind. A RAND Corporation study revealed, “although NATO has greater capabilities overall, it is easier for Russia to mass forces on its border and threaten a neighbor than for NATO to mass forces in response.”²²⁰

E. THE USE OF RUSSIAN MEDIA

The belief that Russia must defend its sphere of influence is perpetrated consistently by Russian elites and the Russian media. Within two weeks of annexing Crimea, Russia announced plans to rebuild its naval base in Sevastopol, suggests a grand

²¹⁷ “Russia Vows Response to U.S. Naval Ship’s Entry into Black Sea,” *USA Today*, last modified June 10, 2016, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2016/06/10/russia-vows-response-us-naval-ships-entry-into-black-sea/85686822/>.

²¹⁸ “Warsaw Summit Communiqué,” NATO, last modified July 9, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm.

²¹⁹ “A New Balance Of Power In The Black Sea?” *CACI Analyst*, September 15, 2015, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13393-a-new-balance-of-power-in-the-black-sea?.html>.

²²⁰ Olga Oliker, Michael McNerney, and Lynn E. Davis, “NATO Needs a Comprehensive Strategy for Russia,” *RAND* (2015): 9.

scheme behind Russia's motivations. Boasts of vast improvements are highlighted: six improved Kilo-class submarines, six Admiral Grigorovich class frigates, long-range cruise missiles, their newest surface-to-air missiles, and more.²²¹ Yet, Russia contends it is merely responding to NATO aggression. Vladimir Putin posits an argument challenging:

Publish the world map in your newspaper and mark all the U.S. military bases on it, you will see the difference [between Russian and Western aggression]. As for us, we are not expanding anywhere; it is NATO infrastructure, including military infrastructure that is moving towards our borders. Is this a manifestation of our aggression?²²²

Russia's Putin suggests that all of their actions are merely to counter an aggressive West. Russian media outlets echo the sentiment of their leader arguing, "NATO is trying to move confrontational schemes to the Black Sea and Russia will take measures to neutralize potential threats."²²³ Moscow continues to deny claims of alleged interference in Ukraine and insists, "NATO's military build-up on Russia's borders is provocative and could harm regional and global stability."²²⁴ Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova posted answers to questions posed by journalists repeating President Putin's stance:

Along with the deployment of missile defense system elements in Deveselu and other U.S. and NATO military infrastructure facilities in Romania and other countries, they indicate a desire to step up military activity in the region in close proximity to Russia's borders. This seriously undermines security and stability in this part of the continent forcing Russia to take adequate countermeasures to ensure its own security.²²⁵

²²¹ Steven Horrell, "A NATO Strategy for Security in the Black Sea Region" Atlantic Council (2016): 2.

²²² "Putin: Publish A World Map And Mark All The U.S. Military Bases On It. You Will See The Difference Between Russia And The US," Mint Press News, June 8, 2015, <http://www.mintpressnews.com/putin-publish-a-world-map-and-mark-al-the-u-s-military-bases-on-it-you-will-see-the-difference-between-russia-and-the-us/206343/>.

²²³ "Russia to Respond to NATO Attempts to Bring Conflicts to Black Sea," *Sputnik News*, May 30, 2016, <https://sputniknews.com/world/201605301040505309-russia-nato-black-sea-conflict/>.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ "Moscow Says Plans to Create NATO's Black Sea Flotilla Undermine Regional Security," *TASS*, April 27, 2016, <http://tass.com/politics/872870>.

Whereas Western media portrays the Black Sea in a Cold War scenario, Russia maintains that this is only a Western invention. TASS reported statements of Russian diplomats, “I don’t want to say we have a ‘cold war’ in our relations with NATO, but the alliance seems to be opting for the cold war era security schemes, and it causes alarm as they imply not only politics but military build-up as well.”²²⁶ In fact, it is Russia that is diplomatically trying to calm the waters when Russia’s Permanent Representative to NATO Alexander Grushko, stated that “the quality of European security will depend not only on our ability to defuse the current tensions in relations between NATO and Russia in military terms but also on our ability to establish real collective cooperation in counteracting common security threats.”²²⁷ Still, Russians see NATO as an attempt to isolate Russia and that it exists because “NATO feels absolutely uncomfortable when it doesn’t have a big enemy.”²²⁸ Whereas NATO is building infrastructure around Russia, Russia is building its military capabilities on its own territory. Meanwhile, Grushko stressed about NATO, “I think it is a deliberate policy geared to justify NATO’s existence in the new security environment and concurrently solve other tasks- to make the Europeans shell out with defense spending and force them to buy U.S. made weapons.”²²⁹

Russia maintains that its military buildup on the Black Sea is in self-defense of NATO and U.S. expansionary interests. Using the state-controlled media, Russian outlets continuously stoke the flames while simultaneously projecting Russian military might. Actions on the Black Sea and in the air above are backed up by forceful rhetoric. Russia vehemently asserts that any battles on the Black Sea would easily be won by Russia. Confidently Russians can say that “NATO ships will not be able to come close to Russian shores” and that if they do Russian submarines with their Kalibr sea-based cruise missiles

²²⁶ “Russian NATO envoy says Black Sea will Never Be ‘NATO’s Lake,’” *TASS*, May 30, 2016, <http://tass.com/politics/879042>.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

are “capable of raking the entire Black Sea with fire.”²³⁰ Former head of the coastal defense troops of the Soviet and Russian Black Sea Fleets, Major-General Vladimir Romanenko stated, “by my estimations, any NATO squadron, in combat conditions, would not survive any longer than 5–7 minutes.”²³¹ Reiterating this train of thought, a Pravda Report disputed NATO’s power stating “Those ships that currently stay in the Black Sea would never be able to cause considerable damage to either the Black Sea Fleet or the territory of Russia, even if they wanted to.”²³² Therefore, while maintaining that Russia is not the aggressor and only builds up its fleet in self-defense of NATO, Russia also does not shy from conflict and assures absolute victory. Whether this is to reassure the public as to Russia’s power or to ensure the west thinks twice before continuing their actions, remains to be seen.

F. CONCLUSION

It is nearly impossible to know the true nature of a state’s reasons for its actions, especially concerning aggressive actions as seen by Russia’s annexation of Crimea. While it may be hard to see issues through the lens of the other side, it remains imperative if for no other reason than to understand how to counter those issues. The fact is that Russia has had links to the Black Sea and shares a history with Ukraine and Crimea longer than the entire history of the United States. Justifying actions by stating that a portion of land is essentially Russian; as are the people, who occupy presents a formidable argument to some. Reasons of oil export, trade, and military base requirements are all reasons that even critics would agree that the United States used to seize foreign territory. While some arguments may have areas of validity, it is clear that the Putin leadership is all in and will continue to use these arguments to convince the Russian population and the rest of the world. Harkening back to the glory days of the

²³⁰ “Why NATO’s Growing Presence in Black Sea Won’t Change the Strategic Balance,” *Sputnik News*, last modified June 1, 2016, <https://sputniknews.com/military/201606011040598984-nato-black-sea-russia-strategic-balance-analysis/>.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² “NATO Ships Would Live For Ten Minutes Max If They Attack Russia,” *Pravda Report*, last modified July 6, 2016, http://www.pravdareport.com/russia/politics/07-06-2016/134651-nato_russia_black_sea-0/.

Russian Empire and playing to people's familial ties and shared histories can be a powerful nostalgia especially when used to brush over harsh inconsistencies in those particular stances. It does not seem to play as well with those outside Russia, although comments from the Trump presidency seem to lean further than any president in recent history. Nonetheless, it is important to understand the motivations behind an adversary's actions to take over territory and ignore the sovereignty of nations in its sphere of influence. Patrimonial activism on Russia's part presents them with an important enigma as author Bobo Lo declares: "Moscow therefore faces a difficult choice: either it recasts its approach to factor in the changing dynamics in these countries...or it insists on its 'rights' and risks damaging the very relationships and influence to which it attaches such importance."²³³

²³³ Lo, *Russia*, Kindle location 276.

V. CONCLUSION

Alexis De Tocqueville wrote after his journey to America, “there are now two great nations in the world which, starting from different points seems to be advancing toward the same goal: the Russians and the Anglo-Americans.”²³⁴ Tocqueville was able to observe and foresee how two superpowers would come to be. The world today is more than two global hegemonies but still the rhetoric and threat of nuclear war at the Cold War level exists. An irredentist Russia led by Vladimir Putin seems wholeheartedly aimed at upending the status quo and reclaiming the prestige of a world leader. The United States is currently looking inward and drawing back from involvement in European affairs. For the first time in many decades, European leaders are willing to take a new direction having lost faith in the trans-Atlantic alliance.²³⁵ While the future is unclear, one can be sure that Europe remains a battlefield for ideology and identity. As has been their historical experience, Romanians again find themselves in the middle between a free democratic Europe and a resurgent authoritarian Russia. The United States has established a special relationship with Romania as the nations continue to support each other against threats, both internal and external.

Perhaps one of the largest threats looming over NATO and cooperation among U.S. allies is the internal struggle over the importance of Europe and NATO inside the Trump administration. The very function of the U.S. as it pertains to peace in Europe is under evaluation. After a joint session with Stoltenberg, President Trump declared, “I said NATO was obsolete, it is no longer obsolete.”²³⁶ Yet with a policy of America First, allies may need more reassurance. Proposed cuts to the State Department in both budget and personnel would cause a complete reorganization of the department and major

²³⁴ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969), 412–13.

²³⁵ Eli Watkins, “While Campaigning, Merkel Says Europeans can’t Completely Rely on US, Others,” *CNN Politics*, May 29, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/28/politics/angela-merkel-donald-trump-g7/>.

²³⁶ Philip Wegmann, “Trump Deserves Praise for Recognizing Importance of NATO,” *Washington Examiner*, April 12, 2017, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/trump-deserves-praise-for-recognizing-importance-of-nato/article/2620144>.

hindrance to American influence abroad.²³⁷ Ambassadors and country teams already operate with insufficient assets, and may have to cut back further.²³⁸

Here, the importance of the citizen-soldier will prove invaluable. Interagency coordination and multinational cooperation will be in the hands of the personnel in uniform serving overseas. For this reason, it is vital for those personnel deployed to understand the cultural environment they live in. UN diplomat Deborah Goodwin's account of military cooperation in the Standard Generic Training Materials for the United Nations, cites, "peacekeepers should understand the cultural/historical context within which they work, including factors that influence the operation and the external pressures that inform the interest of other parties."²³⁹ It is imperative that military personnel understand the nation where they are serving, whether it is Romania or elsewhere, even more so in a quickly changing environment where policy is uncertain.

This thesis has explored the long history of Romanian conflict, specifically the Romanian struggle with national identity and to which direction to turn in order to guarantee security. The United States works alongside Romanian forces in a variety of capacities, none more important than the stationing of Aegis Ashore. The basis of the decision of where to implant the Aegis facility through the lens of domestic politics revealed an important difference with each leader. The distinction between each president's actions is important in understanding the role an individual can have in global affairs while predisposed to domestic constraints and partisan influences. Russia's perceptions based on the construction of a Russian identity rooted in culture and history determine Russia's actions in the same ways as Romania and the United States.

While one cannot be assured as to what the current administration will do concerning NATO and European affairs, one can be confident that these issues will

²³⁷ Bryant Harris, Robbie Gramer, and Emily Tamkin, "The End of Foreign Aid as We Know It," *Foreign Policy*, April 24, 2017, accessed May 8, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/24/u-s-agency-for-international-development-foreign-aid-state-department-trump-slash-foreign-funding/>.

²³⁸ Robert Oakley and Michael Casey, Jr, "The Country Team: Restructuring America's First Line of Engagement," *Strategic Forum* 227 (September 2007): 6.

²³⁹ David Curran, "Training for Peacekeeping: Towards Increased Understanding of Conflict Resolution?" *International Peacekeeping* 20 (February 2013): 85.

remain at the forefront of global politics. As nationalism rises and terrorist attacks threaten the security and status quo of democratic nations, leaders will continue to choose paths that offer the best option of security for their people. These choices are based on history and culture, and the leaders, military, and populace must understand the underlying motivations of a nation's actions in order to ensure this century is better than the last.

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